



## WORKPLACE SAFETY AND HEALTH IN MONTANA

*From The  
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health*



### State Profile 2002

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*Delivering on the Nation's promise:  
Safety and health at work for all people through prevention.*

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### The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

NIOSH is the primary federal agency responsible for conducting research and making recommendations for the prevention of work-related illness and injury. NIOSH is located in the Department of Health and Human Services in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The NIOSH mission is to provide national and world leadership to prevent work-related illness, injury, disability, and death by gathering information, conducting scientific research, and translating the knowledge gained into products and services. As part of its mission, NIOSH supports programs in every state to improve the health and safety of workers. NIOSH has developed this document to highlight recent NIOSH programs important to workers and employers in Montana.

### The Burden of Occupational Illness and Injury in Montana

- In Montana, there are approximately 456,000 individuals employed in the workforce.<sup>1</sup>
- In 2000, 42 workers died as a result of workplace injuries.<sup>2</sup>
- The agriculture, forestry, and fishing industry had the highest number of fatalities, followed by construction and services.<sup>2</sup>
- In 1999, the most recent year for which data are available, the rate of fatal workplace injuries was 10.2 deaths per 100,000 workers – above the national average rate of 4.5 deaths per 100,000 workers.<sup>2</sup>
- In 2000, there were 19,900 nonfatal workplace injuries and illnesses in Montana.<sup>3</sup>

### The Cost of Occupational Injury and Illness in Montana

In 2000, the most recent year for which data are available, a total of \$150.3 million was paid for workers' compensation claims by Montana private insurers, self-insured employers, and state funds.<sup>4</sup> This figure does not include compensation paid to workers employed by the federal government and also underestimates the total financial burden for private sector businesses since only a fraction of health care costs and earnings lost through work injuries and illnesses is covered by workers' compensation. Chronic occupational illnesses like cancer are substantially under-reported in workers' compensation systems because work-relatedness is often difficult to establish.

# How NIOSH Prevents Worker Injuries and Diseases in Montana

## Health Hazard Evaluations (HHEs) and Technical Assistance

NIOSH evaluates workplace hazards and recommends solutions when requested by employers, workers, or state or federal agencies. Since 1993, NIOSH has responded to 27 requests for HHEs in Montana in a variety of industrial settings, including the following example:

### *Great Falls, Montana: Evaluation of Indoor Air Quality at Healthcare Facility*

In 2000, NIOSH was asked by management of a tertiary healthcare services provider to conduct an HHE in order to evaluate respiratory health and indoor air quality at their healthcare facility in Great Falls, Montana. Concerns included possible microbial contamination of the facility and the implications for exposures during on-going remodeling work. NIOSH investigators concluded that work-related health outcomes were associated with signs of water incursion, microbiological contamination, and ultrafine particle counts at the facility. Recommendations to managers included: conducting medical surveillance for the early detection of work-related respiratory problems of employees; promptly remediating water incursions and replacing all material that remains wet for 24 hours; implementing housekeeping practices that keep dust accumulation at a minimum; providing workers with powder-free or non-latex gloves, where appropriate; and cleaning areas shown to be contaminated with latex dust.

## Building State Capacity

### *State-Based Surveillance*

NIOSH funds the Adult Blood Lead Epidemiology and Surveillance Program (ABLES) in the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services. Through ABLES, the agency's staff track and respond to cases of excessive lead exposure in adults which can cause a variety of adverse health outcomes such as kidney or nervous system damage and potential infertility.

## Extramural Programs Funded by NIOSH

The following is an example of recent training grants funded by NIOSH in the state of Montana:

### *Training Program at Montana Tech*

NIOSH funds a comprehensive undergraduate and graduate program in occupational safety and health and industrial hygiene at Montana Tech of the University of Montana. The program provides a component for engineering programs, i.e., mining safety, welding safety and health, and oil production safety. Short course training is also provided in hazardous waste, supervisor training, and other general and specialized areas. In fiscal year 2001, there were 147 students enrolled and 32 graduates of the program. Three courses were offered to 57 professionals.

*Additional information regarding NIOSH services and activities can be accessed through the NIOSH home page at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/homepage.html> or by calling the NIOSH 800-number at 1-800-356-NIOSH (1-800-356-4674).*

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<sup>1</sup>U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Local Area Unemployment Statistics, Current Population Survey, 2000.

<sup>2</sup>DOL, BLS in cooperation with state and federal agencies, Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, 1999-2000.

<sup>3</sup>DOL, BLS in cooperation with participating state agencies, Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses, 2000.

<sup>4</sup>National Academy of Social Insurance, *Workers' Compensation: Benefits, Coverage, and Costs, 2000 New Estimates*, May 2002.

